

The Planting of the Garden of Eden

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand the various kinds of death so they can learn to explain to others how to have spiritual life. That is the good news that Christ came to offer. In our topic today, we will learn about the planting of the Garden of Eden.

In Genesis 2:8-9, we read, “The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Here, we see that God also took special care to plant a garden as the place for man to live. This garden was in an area called Eden. The word “Eden” means *pleasure*. This is the place God created for mankind to live and also so He could come there to enjoy fellowship with Adam and Eve. Since it was untouched by sin, it was more beautiful than any garden or park developed since the time Adam and Eve sinned.

Next, we see that God caused every tree to grow in this garden. In various parts of the world today, there are many different kinds of trees. However, the Garden of Eden had all of the different kinds of trees in the same garden. We see that God describes those trees in two ways. God said the trees were pleasant to the sight. Here, we see that the original trees were trees of great beauty. In addition, the trees in the garden were also good for food, as they provided many different kinds of fruit. In nearly every place where anyone lives on the earth, they still have the opportunity to enjoy some of the trees and their fruit. This is one of the blessings that God has continued to supply throughout the earth, even though the trees may not be as beautiful as they were in the garden.

We also see that the garden contained two special trees. The first of these was the tree of life, which was placed in the middle of the garden. The tree of life is described in Revelation 22:2, where we read, “In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.” Here, we see that the tree of life in the future will yield twelve different kinds of fruit, a new kind of fruit every month. This same thing was probably true with the original tree of life that God placed in the center of the Garden of Eden. Once Adam sinned, God had to prevent mankind from eating of this tree because that would have caused man to live with the consequences of sin forever. Genesis 3:22 says, “Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’ ...”

The second tree that was unique to the garden was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In Genesis 2:17, God said, “‘But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” Here, we see that God placed one tree in the garden that gave Adam and Eve a choice. They could choose to avoid eating of this tree and they would live forever. In contrast, they could choose to disobey God and experience immediate death that day. We will see that Adam and Eve did experience spiritual death (separation from God) as soon as they ate the fruit of that tree. Genesis 3:7-8 says, “Then the eyes of both of them were

opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” Here, we see the first example of the fact that wrong choices can have eternal consequences.

Genesis 2:10-14 goes on to say, “Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. The name of the first *is* Pishon; it *is* the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where *there is* gold. And the gold of that land *is* good. Bdellium and the onyx stone *are* there. The name of the second river *is* Gihon; it *is* the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river *is* Hiddekel; it *is* the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river *is* the Euphrates.” The word translated “went out of” means *to go or to come from a place and go to another place*. This meant that the river started in the garden and went from there to various areas. This was probably a giant spring where a large amount of water was continually coming up from the earth.

The giant spring caused so much water to come out of the earth that it made four rivers. These rivers flowed in various directions. The name of the first river was called Pishon (increase). Pishon went around the whole edge of the land of Havilah. We see that Havilah was known for three things. The land had a lot of gold, and we are told that the gold of that land was good. This meant that it was high-quality gold. The land also had a lot of two other items. Bdellium is a wonderful smelling gum that comes from a tree. It is used to make perfumes that have a good smell. We also see that this area had a lot of onyx stones. Onyx stones are very beautiful and are often used to make jewelry. Larger pieces can often be cut and used like marble to show their beauty.

The name of the second river was the Gihon (bursting forth). It went around the whole land of Cush (Ethiopia). The name of the third river was Hiddekel (rapid – this river is better known as Tigris). It went toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates (fruitfulness). The garden and all of these rivers were dramatically changed at the time of the flood. Genesis 7:11 says, “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.” Before the flood, the waters of the rivers came from inside the earth. When these fountains of the deep were broken up, it created many changes throughout the entire earth, so it is probable that the way the earth looked before the flood is not the same as it is today.

We go on to see that God gave Adam instructions about the care of the Garden of Eden. Genesis 2:15-17 says, “Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” God put Adam in this beautiful garden and told him to tend and keep it. The word translated “tend” means *to work*. The word translated “keep” means *to take care of*. Here, we see that God gave Adam responsibility for the garden.

Work and responsibility were enjoyable before sin came into the world. Genesis 3:17b-19 tells how the consequences of sin changed work so it became difficult. Those verses say, “‘Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat *of* it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles

it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return.” This curse on the ground made work something that required toil. The word translated “toil” means *pain, labor, and hardship*. These things were not a part of work before sin.

God also gave Adam instructions about the freedom he had and the one thing he was not to do. God told Adam that he could freely eat of every tree in the garden except one tree. This meant that Adam was free to eat the fruit on hundreds of trees. In fact, there was only one tree of which he was told to avoid the fruit, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was nearly total liberty, as there was only one thing mankind could not do. When we become Christians, we have this liberty and freedom restored. Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Then, Galatians 5:13 adds, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” By giving Adam these instructions, there was only one thing that Adam could do to disobey God.

This chapter shows us that God created an ideal place for Adam to live. He was free to do almost anything he chose to do. He was free to obey or to disobey. The choice to obey had only blessing to offer. The choice to disobey had a very serious consequence, immediate spiritual death. It would also cause physical death at a later time. That is why God told Adam not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God told Adam that the day he ate of the fruit of that tree, he would surely die. This meant that Adam had been given a clear explanation of the consequences of eating of the fruit of that tree. 1 Timothy 2:14 says, “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” Here, we see that Adam was not deceived when he ate that fruit. He had been told the exact consequences and chose to eat the fruit anyway.

God gave Adam the freedom of choice. However, that freedom led to the decision to sin. James 1:14-15 says, “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” God warned Adam about the consequences of that choice before he made the choice to sin. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn why it is important to explain to others the consequences of the choices that they make. In that way, they learn to follow the example of the Lord by helping others understand that choices lead to consequences. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the consequences of sinful choices.